

# EASY AMERICAN IDIOMS

Hundreds of idiomatic expressions to give you an edge in English!

by Rachel Varra

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## My Toe Is Killing Me!

Doctor: Sorry you waited so long, Paul; I've been *tied up* all afternoon. What seems to be the problem this time?

Paul: Doc, *my toe's killing me*. I think it's broken.

Doctor: Hmm . . . Let's have a look. Oh, yeah, *that's a beauty*. You really *did a number* on that toe. How'd it happen?

Paul: I was helping my brother move. I dropped a desk on my foot.

Doctor: Well, that's a *surefire way* to break some bones. Paul, didn't I see you last year for some sprained fingers?

Paul: Yeah . . . I was trying to fix the toilet and got my hand stuck. I yanked it out, and hurt myself. I'm still trying to *live that one down*.

Doctor: Well, Mr. Fix-it, you've really *outdone yourself* this time. You won't be walking with this foot for eight weeks.

Paul: That's impossible! I have a camping trip scheduled for six weeks from now. Can't it be healed by then?

Doctor: That's a *tall order*, Paul . . . But I suppose it's not *out of the question*. With a lot of rest now . . . and intensive physical therapy, you just may be *back in the saddle* again in six weeks. But the therapy requires a lot of work, and time . . . and specifically, following the doctor's orders . . . Can you *handle* that?

Paul: *Piece of cake!*

Doctor: But listen, even if you are walking by then, you've got to *take it easy* during the trip. No climbing trees or jumping across streams or anything. You really need to *baby* this leg for a while!

Paul: Sure thing.

Doctor: Well, Paul . . . let's get you bandaged up. We'll have you hobbling out of here in no time. Now . . . I want you to *keep an eye on* the swelling in the rest of the leg and foot. And *get in touch with* Dr. Phillips . . . She's the physical therapist.

Paul: Okay, Doc. Should I *drop by* here another day?

Doctor: Yes. We're going to want to *follow up* on this in about two weeks.

Paul: I'll schedule an appointment with the receptionist. Thanks. Bye, Doc.

Doctor: You're welcome. And Paul, take it easy, would you?

Paul: Yes, I will. I promise.

1. To be tied up with something or someone. To be busy.
2. To be killing someone. To be very painful.
3. A beauty. A very good or vivid example of something; in this case, a really good example of a bad injury.
4. To do a number on something. To damage, destroy, or hurt something badly.
5. A surefire way to do something. A way that will definitely have a certain outcome or result.
6. To live something down. To be allowed to forget about an embarrassing situation. This is used in the negative—to never or not live something down. A common way you'll hear this expression is the phrase "I'll never live this down!"
7. To outdo yourself. To do something very well. To do better than you normally do. Note that this expression is often used in a sarcastic way.
8. A tall order. An unusually difficult request.
9. To be out of the question. To be impossible to accomplish.
10. To be back in the saddle. To return to your normal activities, especially after an illness or injury. To be back in control of your normal activities.
11. To handle something. To cope with or manage a situation.
12. To be a piece of cake. To be very easy.
13. To take it easy. To do things slowly and carefully, without tiring yourself.
14. To baby someone or something. To treat very carefully and with great sensitivity.
15. To keep an eye on. To watch carefully.
16. To get in touch with. To contact, to talk to someone.
17. To drop by. To visit someone.
18. To follow up on something. To address or check on a situation later.

## Tying the Knot

Mike: Hmmm . . . What's this card? "Join us! Matt and Allison are *tying the knot*! *Take the plunge* with them Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, at their Engagement/Beach Party. There'll be no chance to *get cold feet* at this sizzling hot summer party! Takes place at Turtle Beach. This party is no *stuffy* ceremony, so join in if you want to see the couple *let their hair down* one last time before *the walk down the aisle*! RSVP by Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. It'll be a blast!" Wow. Matt and Allison are getting married! *Didn't see that coming*.

Allison: Mike! You're here! So glad you could make it!

Mike: Wouldn't miss it for the world!

Matt: Hey, buddy! How are ya?

Mike: Great! Congratulations, you two!

Matt and Allison: Thanks!

Mike: Looks like a good *turnout*!

Matt: Yeah, we're happy so many people could come.

Mike: So you two are finally gonna *get hitched*. Who *popped the question*? Was it you, Matt, or did you propose to him, Allison?

Matt: I decided to be the romantic one. I took Allison to the park where we had our five-year anniversary picnic, and asked her there . . . She was in a bad mood that day . . . I almost *lost my nerve*—I thought she was gonna *turn me down*!

Allison: He's right . . . I almost left him in the park. I had a terrible migraine. Stress at work. And he'd been acting so strange, I guess getting ready for the big question.

Mike: Have you guys *settled on* a date yet?

Allison: We're close . . . Sometime next July. You'll be around, won't you?

Mike: You can *count on it*.

Allison: Oh, I just saw my aunt arrive. Sorry *to bail* on you Mike, right when you get here!

Mike: No, no problem; we'll catch up later on.

Allison: Great. See you both in a bit.

Mike: Okay, can I ask you something direct?

Matt: Ha! It's not like you've ever been one to *beat around the bush*.

Mike: Fair enough. *Give it to me straight*. Did she *bully* you *into* this?

Matt: No, seriously . . . I really want this.

Mike: I tell ya, when I got the invite, it really *threw me for a loop*. You've *done a complete 180*. Just a couple months ago, you were telling me how you kind of missed *playing the field*.

Matt: I know. But things have changed. I guess I've *settled down*.

Mike: I guess so! What happened?

Matt: Well, remember that car accident Allison had? When I found out, it was a real *wake-up call*. I remember thinking I didn't know how I would live without this woman. It hit me—she was the one for me. I decided I should either marry her or stop *seeing her*.

Mike: Wow.

Matt: Really, and since I've proposed, everything has been perfect. I feel like a million bucks. It was the right decision.

Mike: I have *to hand it to you*. It seems like you're really getting your life *on track*. You're a lucky man. She's a great person. You deserve a great woman.

Matt: Thanks, I appreciate that. But come on, this is supposed to be fun. Let's grab a beer and join the party.

Mike: Great idea.

1. To tie the knot. To get married.
2. To take the plunge. To follow through on a big or life-changing decision. On the invitation, it has a double meaning. It refers

both to a “plunge” into water at the beach party and to the fact that Matt and Allison will be getting married.

3. To get cold feet. To be or become afraid to do something. To have second thoughts. Notice that you can also say “have cold feet.”
4. Stuffy. Formal. Overly conservative in ceremony and style.
5. To let your hair down. To celebrate in a free and uninhibited way.
6. To walk down the aisle. To get married.
7. To not see something coming. To not expect something. To be surprised by something.
8. A turnout. The number of people at an event. Notice that there’s also the verb “to turn out.”
9. To get hitched. To get married. These days, this expression is an informal, humorous, and exaggerated way to say “to get married.”
10. To pop the question. To propose marriage to someone.
11. To lose your nerve. To lose courage.
12. To turn someone or something down. To say “no” to someone or something.
13. To settle on something. To decide something after discussion, consideration, or negotiation.
14. To count on something. To depend on something happening. To be sure something will happen.
15. To bail. To leave a person or quit a project earlier than expected. You can also say “to bail out on someone or something.”
16. To beat around the bush. To be indirect in approach in order to avoid confrontation.
17. To give it to someone straight. To be direct and honest with someone.
18. To bully someone into something. To force someone to do something.
19. To throw someone for a loop. To surprise someone. To confuse someone with something unexpected.
20. To do a 180. To change in a drastic way. To turn completely around.
21. To play the field. To date many different people.
22. To settle down. To grow comfortable and content in a routine or situation, especially in a relationship with another person.

Often, this implies growing older and more responsible, or less fun-loving and free, depending on how you look at it!

23. To be a wake-up call. To be something that changes your view of what is important or possible.
24. To be seeing someone. To date someone informally.
25. To hand it to someone. To acknowledge someone’s achievement.
26. To get something on track. To make decisions and take actions about something that will lead to a favorable outcome.

LESSON

3

## That’s a Weight off My Shoulders!

Giovanni: Hello?

Briona: Hey, Giovanni. It’s Bri.

Giovanni: Hey.

Briona: You know, Dad’s birthday is *coming up* in four days . . .

Giovanni: Oh man, I almost forgot! It really *sneaked up on me* this year.

Briona: Yeah, I thought it might have *slipped your mind*. So, I was wondering—do you wanna *go in on* a gift for him with me?

Giovanni: Yeah, sure . . . but I don’t *have a clue* what we should get him.

Briona: Me neither. I was thinking we could go to the mall and *look around*. Maybe something will *turn up*.

Giovanni: When do you want to go?

Briona: Friday good?

Giovanni: Sounds like a plan. See ya then.

Briona: What about a new grill?

Giovanni: Bri, I’m not a rich guy. I can’t afford to *break the bank* with this gift.

Briona: Okay, how about a gift certificate to a bookstore? Dad loves to read. He’s a real *bookworm*.

Giovanni: Yeah, we already thought of that, and Aunt Linda *is on the case*.

- Briona: Fine. Neckties?
- Giovanni: Can you get any more *run-of-the-mill*?
- Briona: Well, then WHAT?! Every suggestion I make, you *tear to pieces*. At least *throw me a bone* here! It's not helpful for you to just *shoot down* my ideas!
- Giovanni: Well, I don't know what to get him either. What do you buy for the man who has everything?
- Briona: Oh, you're a great help! Your optimism is beginning to *get on my nerves*. *I'm beat*. Maybe we should just *call it a day*.
- Giovanni: No, wait . . . All right, Bri, you want my *two cents*?
- Briona: Finally! Yes! What do you think?
- Giovanni: It's his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, so we should get him something good. . . .
- Briona: Like . . . ?
- Giovanni: I don't know . . . Something that really *knocks his socks off*!
- Briona: Big help you are! You know, you could at least . . . Hey! That's it! Didn't Dad say he wanted to start exercising, because he feels like he's *not in shape*?
- Giovanni: Yeah . . .
- Briona: Well . . . we could get him a pair of running shoes, and a membership to a club!
- Giovanni: Hmmm . . . That's not bad. But how much will I have to *shell out*?
- Briona: Don't worry . . . Pay what you can; I'll pay the rest.
- Giovanni: This is *hands down* the best idea I've heard all day.
- Briona: What a *weight off my shoulders*!
- Giovanni: Mine too! And since I inspired it, you should treat me to lunch.
- Briona: *Don't push your luck*!
1. To be coming up. To be about to occur. To happen in the near future.
  2. To sneak up on somebody. To happen or be about to happen without someone's realization or preparation. By the way, you'll hear many people use the past form "snuck" as well.
  3. To slip someone's mind. To be forgotten.

4. To go in on something with someone. To share the cost or expense of something with someone.
5. To not have a clue. To not know about something at all.
6. To look around. To move through a place and observe without the intention of finding something in particular.
7. To turn up. To appear or be found.
8. To break the bank. To spend all your money on something, to empty your bank account to pay for something, to pay too much for something.
9. Bookworm. A person who loves to read.
10. To be on the case. To already be working on a certain project, to have begun working to achieve a particular goal.
11. To be run-of-the-mill. To be ordinary or typical. To be commonplace.
12. To tear something to pieces. To find fault with something or harshly criticize. To insult.
13. To throw someone a bone. To make a small or token gesture of support for someone, often in a patronizing way.
14. To shoot something down. To dismiss or reject something, such as an idea or a suggestion.
15. To get on someone's nerves. To annoy or agitate someone.
16. To be beat. To be exhausted.
17. To call it a day. To decide that a project, event, or situation is over. To stop working on something for the day.
18. To put in or give your two cents. To give your opinion or share your ideas about something.
19. To knock someone's socks off. To shock or surprise someone in a pleasant or happy way by performing beyond expectation.
20. To be in shape. To be in good physical condition. Note that you can also say "to get in shape," meaning "to train your body and become physically fit."
21. To shell out. To pay, usually a bit unwillingly.
22. Hands down. Without a doubt.
23. To be a weight off your shoulders. To no longer be a source of worry or concern for you.
24. To push your luck. To try to get too much of a reward, to be greedy, to want too much.

## I Have a Bone to Pick with You!

Andrew: Don't we get off here, at this exit?

Rob: *Beats me* . . . You said you *had* the directions *covered*.

Andrew: Yeah, but I'm also driving right now. Just look in the glove compartment. I think I put them in there.

Rob: They're not here.

Andrew: They should be . . . Let me see . . . Oh man, I took them out to double-check something and forgot to put them back in. It must have *slipped my mind* . . .

Rob: So we're lost? That's great.

Andrew: It's no big deal. We can call or ask someone for directions.

Rob: This is typical. Why did you say you'd handle the directions if you weren't going to handle them?

Andrew: *Look who's talking!* The only reason I said I'd handle them is because I knew you couldn't be counted on.

Rob: Me? You've got to be kidding. You're the one who doesn't *give a damn* about anyone around you.

Andrew: All right, let's not *fly off the handle* here. We just need to get directions. There's no reason to *make a mountain out of a molehill*. What's the deal? (Silence.)

Andrew: C'mon. If you *have a bone to pick with me*, don't beat around the bush . . . *Let's get it out in the open* before we get to Aunt Helen's place.

Rob: All right, fine. I think you've become a bit of a *slacker* lately.

Andrew: You think I'm a slacker? That's a bit harsh. Why would you say something like that? *What's eating you?*

Rob: Well, for instance, last week you needed to borrow one of my shirts for work because you didn't bother to plan ahead and buy one yourself.

Andrew: It's just a shirt! Are you really that *bent out of shape* over my borrowing a shirt? You need to *lighten up* a bit, Rob.

Rob: It's not just the shirt, Andrew. It's that you *lean on* everyone else and expect them to *pick up your slack*. You don't take responsibility—you're always *passing the buck*.

Andrew: That's insane. I needed a shirt for a new job. If I were such a slacker I wouldn't even have a job.

Rob: Okay, let's talk about the job, then.

Andrew: What about it?

Rob: Well, I got you that job. I *hooked you up* with a great job at a place where I've worked for three years.

Andrew: And I've thanked you for it like a thousand times.

Rob: Yeah, but what you do there reflects on me. If you *screw up* it really *gives me a bad name*.

Andrew: How am I screwing up? I *work my tail off* there!

Rob: Sometimes, yeah, but you also sit around *twiddling your thumbs* a lot, too.

Andrew: Oh, that's *bull*.

Rob: No, it's true. And you also seem to find a lot of time to *chat up* the pretty girls who walk in instead of doing your job.

Andrew: I'm a salesman! I'm supposed to talk with the customers.

Rob: But it's the same thing at home. You're still living with Mom and Dad, and you hardly ever *lift a finger* around the house to help out. You're 22 years old and your room *looks like a train wreck*. You don't even *pitch in* with groceries . . .

Andrew: That's not true at all! And how would you know? You're not even there.

Rob: I have eyes, Andrew. I can see. You still act like a child sometimes.

Andrew: Oh, you need to *get off your high horse*, Rob. You're the one acting like a child. You're still trying to *show everyone up*, like little Mr. Perfect. You were a *goody-goody* as a kid, and you haven't changed since.

Rob: Hey, what do you know . . . ?

Andrew: What?

Rob: While we were *at each other's throats* you somehow managed to get us to Aunt Helen's.

Andrew: Oh, yeah. That's her house there. Pretty good for such a slacker.

Rob: Just park the car and *give it a rest* for now.

Andrew: Gladly. Just don't criticize my parking job.

Rob: Ugh. The ride home is going to be long . . .

1. Beats me. I don't know. I have no idea.
2. To have something covered. To be responsible for something, to handle something.
3. To slip someone's mind. To be forgotten by someone.
4. Look who's talking! An expression of disbelief or irony meaning that someone is guilty of something he or she is blaming someone else for.
5. To not give a damn. To not care. Note that some people consider the word "damn" to be harsh and impolite, so an alternate expression is to not give a darn.
6. To fly off the handle. To become extremely agitated, excited, or angry. To react too strongly to a situation.
7. To make a mountain out of a molehill. To exaggerate a situation, to turn a relatively minor situation into something much bigger or more important than it should be.
8. To have a bone to pick with someone. To have a problem or complaint about someone.
9. To get something out in the open. To air a complaint or a grievance, to discuss something openly.
10. Slacker. A lazy or irresponsible person. This expression is related to the verb "to slack off."
11. To be eating someone. To bother, aggravate, or frustrate someone over a period of time.
12. Bent out of shape. Annoyed or bothered by something. Upset. Note that this expression suggests that the reason behind the emotion is insignificant or not worth being upset about.
13. To lighten up. To take a more casual or relaxed attitude. To not be overly upset or angry about something.
14. To lean on. To rely or count on, to be dependent on someone else instead of being self-sufficient.
15. To pick up someone's slack. To compensate for someone else's shortcomings.

16. To pass the buck. To put the blame or responsibility on someone else.
17. To hook someone up with something. To arrange for someone to have something. To help someone obtain something or to give someone something.
18. To screw up. To make mistakes, to perform poorly.
19. To give someone a bad name. To give someone a bad reputation.
20. To work your tail off. To work very hard. To put forth great effort.
21. To twiddle your thumbs. To do nothing. Literally, to have your hands clasped and to move your thumbs in circles around each other.
22. Bull. Nonsense. Something untrue or unbelievable. Note that this is a shortened, more polite form of an expression containing a four-letter word. "Bull" on its own is not considered vulgar, though.
23. To chat someone up. To talk to someone, to show interest in someone by making conversation.
24. To lift a finger. To offer help. To put forth effort to do some sort of physical work.
25. To look like a train wreck. To be very messy or in terrible condition. To appear as if destroyed in some kind of accident.
26. To pitch in. To assist, to share in a responsibility, such as housework or bill paying.
27. To get off your high horse. To stop acting superior or self-righteous.
28. To show someone up. To try to appear better or more competent than other people.
29. Goody-goody. An unflattering name for someone who behaves very well, is very responsible, and never gets into any kind of trouble. An expression that suggests that someone is afraid to do anything wrong.
30. To be at someone's throat. To be fighting with someone. To be aggressively attacking someone.
31. To give something a rest. To stop doing something, to pause or take a break from some kind of activity.

## Like Pulling Teeth

Salena: What a *pain in the neck*! It's *like pulling teeth* trying to get anything done with them!

Dario: What? Who?

Salena: The credit card company sent another bill to my old address!

Dario: Not again . . .

Salena: This is the third time! I thought we *got things squared away* after the last time I called. Now they're saying I have to cough up 150 dollars in late fees!

Dario: You're gonna call and get that *ironed out*, right?

Salena: I don't know . . . I'm so tired of dealing with them, I think I might just *bite the bullet* and pay the late fee.

Dario: Don't do that . . . That's not right . . . Call again and insist on talking to someone who can get it off your record.

Salena: Dario, it's like *flogging a dead horse* . . . Every time I call I get the *same story*. Address changed, everything should be fine. And if I ask to speak with a manager, I have to call back later because no one is there.

Dario: Sounds like they're *giving you the runaround*. Just cancel the card and refuse to pay.

Salena: Well, I will cancel the card, but if I don't pay, I'll have that on my credit record.

Dario: If I *were in your shoes*, I'd call right now.

Salena: Okay . . . Fine . . . You'll see.

Kurtis: Hello, my name is Kurtis. How can I help you today?

Salena: Hi, Kurtis. I got a bill saying that I owe late fees, but the problem is that your company keeps sending statements to my old address, so the payment is already late by the time I get them, and . . .

Kurtis: Okay, let me just *pull up* your account. Just one moment. Okay, there we are. I see that your address is listed as 47 Maple Terrace . . .

Salena: Yeah, that's my new address. But the statements are still being sent to the old one.

Kurtis: Okay, let me just put through a change of address, and we'll . . .

Salena: No, Kurtis, I've *been down that road before*. A few times in fact. I really just want to have these late fees taken care of. Obviously, I shouldn't have to pay them.

Kurtis: I understand ma'am, but unfortunately I *don't call the shots* in that area.

Salena: Okay, then I'd like to talk to someone who does.

Kurtis: All right, ma'am. If you'll just hold . . .

Salena: Kurtis, please don't put me on hold. I've been trying to take care of this problem for weeks now, and I'm really *at my wit's end*. I need to speak to someone right now.

Kurtis: I'm sorry ma'am, but no one is available right now. If you'll just hold . . .

Salena: Kurtis, look, I don't mean to *get on your case* personally, but I feel like I'm just *spinning my wheels* every time I talk to someone in customer service. I'm very dissatisfied, and I'm very frustrated. I've *got a good mind* just to cancel my card.

Kurtis: I'm really sorry you feel that way, ma'am. You are a valued customer, and . . .

Salena: Kurtis, please don't *feed me that line*! If I'm such a valued customer, why can't anyone take care of my problem? It really is *beyond me* how your company can call me a valued customer but continue to . . .

Kurtis: Ma'am, I'm really sorry, but my *hands are tied*. If you'll just let me put you on hold or call back later, I'll . . .

Salena: Call back later? Are you *out of your mind*? I . . . Wait, you know what, I'm not going to *take out my frustration on you*. I know it's not your fault, that you just work there, but I've really *had it with* your company. I'd like to go ahead and cancel my card.

Kurtis: Okay, ma'am. I'm sorry to hear that, but I do understand. I'm going to transfer you to our Cancellations Department, so if you'll just hold . . .

Salena: Oh, *for crying out loud* . . .

1. Pain in the neck. Annoying or bothersome.
2. Like pulling teeth. Very difficult and tedious.
3. To get something squared away. To tie up loose ends. To solve the various smaller problems of a larger troublesome situation.
4. To iron something out. To fix a problem, to correct a mistake in a process.
5. To bite the bullet. To accept a disagreeable solution for a difficult situation.
6. To flog a dead horse. To do something that has no hope of succeeding or bringing about the desired result. Note that this idiom is often used with “beat” instead of “flog.”
7. The same old story. The same explanation for a situation given over and over again.
8. To give someone the runaround. To avoid answering a question or giving someone help by treating them evasively or by misleading them.
9. To be in someone’s shoes. To be in someone else’s position or situation.
10. To pull up. To access a file or other information on a computer.
11. To have been down that road before. To have experienced or tried something before, especially if it was not helpful or pleasant.
12. To call the shots. To make the important decisions.
13. At your wit’s end. Completely frustrated and confused about how to solve a problem.
14. To get on someone’s case. To aggressively bother or nag someone about something.
15. To be spinning your wheels. To be putting forth an effort that is having no useful effect. To be working in vain.
16. To have a good mind to do something. To be inclined to do something. To have a strong desire to do something.
17. To feed someone a line. To tell someone something that is not genuine or truthful. To use a trite or clichéd expression instead of the truth.
18. To be beyond someone. To be impossible to understand, to be completely unbelievable.
19. To have your hands tied. To be unable to do anything to help a situation.

20. To be out of your mind. To be crazy, to be unreasonable or irrational. This expression is very often used in response to someone who proposes something completely unreasonable.
21. To take something out on someone. To direct anger or frustration about something at someone who is not responsible for it.
22. To have had it with something or someone. To be fed up with. To not be able to handle any more of a situation or person.
23. For crying out loud . . . This expresses complete frustration about a situation.

LESSON

# 6

## Honey, There’s Something on My Mind . . .

Al: Hi, sweetie! How are you? Don’t you normally work on Fridays?

Beth: Yeah, but I had to talk to you. It couldn’t wait.

Al: Oh, sure . . . Um, what’s up?

Beth: Well, I need to *get something off my chest*.

Al: That’s good, because *there’s been something on my mind*, too.

Beth: Let me go first; this is important.

Al: Okay.

Beth: I’m sorry to *spring this on you*, but I think we should *break up*.

Al: Wow . . . That’s big news. Well, how . . . I mean . . . Well, why do you want to *dump me*?

Beth: I suppose it would be fair of me to give you a reason.

Al: Well, yeah! This *comes out of nowhere*. A reason would be nice.

Beth: I’m breaking up with you because you’ve become a real *couch potato*. All you do is watch TV. And the only thing you like to watch on TV is cartoons.

Al: But I thought you *were crazy about* cartoons! Remember that time we saw the movie “A Bug’s Life”? You were smiling during the whole thing . . . And you

were in seventh heaven for the rest of the night. Didn't you enjoy it?

Beth: I thought it was cute, but I then I *moved on!* You're still obsessed with cartoons.

Al: Well, what else?

Beth: You've really *let yourself go*, too! We used to go biking and play tennis, and now you just sit around eating cereal, watching your cartoons!

Al: So, I don't *turn you on* anymore? Isn't it a bit shallow to break up with someone just over looks?

Beth: But that's not all. You never want to go out and do anything. We stay here all the time, and your apartment is a pigsty. You never do the dishes or the laundry. There are empty pizza boxes from two weeks ago on your kitchen table. It really *drives me up the wall!*

Al: Mmmm . . . But we've been going out for two years now, and I've never exactly been tidy . . . Why didn't you *bring this up* sooner?

Beth: I thought it was cute at first . . . I thought I would *get used to it*. Later, I thought you would *grow out of it*. Anyway . . . *that's not the point*. I just don't want to see you anymore.

(Silence)

Beth: So . . . you said you had something you wanted to tell me? I suppose how you hate that I try to control your life and change you . . .

Al: No—actually, I wanted to ask you if you knew where I left the remote control for the TV—I haven't been able to find it for weeks.

Beth: *It figures*.

1. To get something off your chest. To say something important that you've been thinking about a lot.
2. To be on your mind. To be something you think a lot about.
3. To spring something on someone. To give someone unexpected news with no preparation or warning.
4. To break up with someone. To end a romantic relationship.

5. To dump someone. To stop being in a romantic relationship with someone.
6. To come out of nowhere. To seem to happen without any logical explanation or warning.
7. Couch potato. A person who sits around and does very little physical activity, often just watching TV.
8. To be crazy about something. To like something a lot.
9. To be in seventh heaven. To feel wonderful, to be very happy.
10. To move on. To begin something else, to stop focusing on one person or thing and to start to think about someone or something else.
11. To let yourself go. To allow yourself to be in bad physical condition because of diet or lack of exercise.
12. To turn someone on. To be a turn-on. To cause an attraction, usually physical.
13. To drive someone up the wall. To annoy someone very much.
14. To bring something up. To start to talk about something, to introduce a topic in conversation.
15. To get used to something. To become accustomed to or familiar with something. Notice that this expression is similar to "to be used to something," meaning to be accustomed to or familiar with something.
16. To grow out of something. To become too old for something, to stop having an interest in something that used to be interesting.
17. To be the point. To be the most important fact or consideration about a topic.
18. It figures. This expression is used, often ironically, to mean that some outcome is logical, expected, or unavoidable.

## Now We're Cooking!

Host: Welcome to *Now We're Cooking!*—where eating gourmet doesn't have to *cost an arm and a leg*. Each week we *break down* culinary masterpieces from world-famous chefs, and take you *step by step* from

choosing the right ingredients to serving them up. Today we've got a lasagna by our guest chef Vincent Charbelle that will knock your socks off. I mean, it's really *out of this world*. Chef Charbelle is here with us to share his recipe and teach us a few *tricks of the trade*. Welcome, Chef Charbelle. Thank you for joining us.

Chef Charbelle: Thanks for having me, Brian.

Host: The lasagna we'll make today is your own recipe?

Chef Charbelle: Yes.

Host: And we'll make it all *from scratch* . . .

Chef Charbelle: Certainly, and all with fresh ingredients. That's really the secret to *top-notch* cooking.

Host: When did you first *dream up* this special lasagna?

Chef Charbelle: About eight years ago. I was eating at a friend's party and realized how lifeless most people's lasagna is. I wanted a lasagna with *zip*, something that would *stick to the ribs*, but wouldn't *weigh you down*. So I went home that night and baked about fifteen trays of it until I *came upon* this recipe.

Host: Incredible! It took some time, but you really *came up with* something unique. Well, let's get started. As usual here on *Now We're Cooking!* to prove that even amateurs can make meals *to die for*, we invite a member of our studio audience to *lend a hand* in the preparation of the dish. Today we have Beatrice from San Diego. Welcome, Beatrice.

Beatrice: Hello.

Host: Are you ready?

Beatrice: I'm really a terrible cook. . . .

Host: That's why you're here, Beatrice . . . To show the world that you too can make exquisite food. Just *give it your best shot*.

Beatrice: Okay. I'll try it. I guess *the proof is in the pudding!* Or at least the lasagna, in this case.

Host: That's right. Okay, let's take a short commercial break, and then we'll pick up with our lasagna where we left off.

(Commercial break.)

Host: Hello, welcome back to *Now We're Cooking!* During the commercial break, we mixed the cheeses and spices, boiled the noodles, and made a sauce from home-grown tomatoes. So now we're ready to put this baby together!

Beatrice: I think I over-boiled the noodles.

Chef Charbelle: No, Beatrice, you did fine . . . You caught them *in the nick of time*.

Host: Well, that brings up a good point. For lasagnas, or any pasta dish that will be baked or re-heated later, you want to undercook the noodles . . . This prevents them from getting soggy when you re-cook them later.

Chef Charbelle: Absolutely, Brian.

Host: So, let's get to it.

Chef Charbelle: You might notice that Beatrice has *laid out* the noodles flat while we were waiting to use them. This is so that they don't dry in weird positions before we get a chance to put the lasagna together.

Host: Great. Now, the rest of this is really a piece of cake.

Chef Charbelle: You said it. We're just gonna put down a layer of noodles, then sauce, then cheese, and keep on like that till we fill the tray. Here Beatrice, you try.

Beatrice: Okay.

Chef Charbelle: Now to *give* this lasagna some *kick*, you want to lace the lasagna throughout with a grated cheese that *has bite* . . . Beatrice is using a nice robust pecorino cheese. Lookin' good, Beatrice!

Beatrice: Thanks.

Chef Charbelle: While Beatrice finishes up here, I'll show you a tray that I finished and baked ahead of time.

Host: Let me help you . . . Can our cameras get a shot of that? Now that's a lasagna you can *sink your teeth into!* Thanks, Mr. Charbelle. That's all for our show today. Folks, as always, don't forget what we always say here at *Now We're Cooking!*—*The devil's in the details* and the *secret's in the sauce!*

1. To be cooking. To be on the right track, to be making very good progress, to be on a roll with ideas.

2. To cost an arm and a leg. To be very expensive.
3. To break something down. To divide something into smaller parts in order to explain it or understand it more easily.
4. Step by step. One piece or part at a time, little by little.
5. Out of this world. Outstanding, incredibly good.
6. Tricks of the trade. Information that experienced people in a field know that makes their work easier or the product of their labor of a better quality.
7. From scratch. Homemade, by hand, from basic rather than prepackaged ingredients.
8. Top-notch. Of the highest quality.
9. To dream up. To invent or conceive of.
10. Zip. Spiciness, flavor, tanginess. Not usually used with reference to sweet foods. Note that zing, bite, and kick are all used to mean the same thing.
11. To stick to the ribs. To be filling. To be substantial.
12. To weigh someone down. To make someone feel slow or tired. Said of something experienced as a weight—emotional, physical, psychological, etc.
13. To come upon. To discover by accident.
14. To come up with. To create something original.
15. Something to die for. Something that is amazing or great.
16. To lend a hand. To help. Notice that “a hand” can be used to mean “help” in other expressions—to offer a hand, to ask for a hand, to need a hand, etc.
17. To give it your best shot. To try the best that you can.
18. The proof is in the pudding. A saying that means that the true measure of how good something is can only be judged once it is made or done.
19. In the nick of time. Just in time, with no extra time to spare.
20. To lay out. To arrange in a flat position, to spread out.
21. Something to sink your teeth into. Something of substance or depth. Also used in reference to non-food items.
22. The devil’s in the details. A saying that means that changes in seemingly small or minor elements can make a big difference in the outcome.
23. The secret’s in the sauce. A saying that means that the secret that makes something special or valuable is hidden or not immediately visible.

Jade: I’m so tired of shopping! Trying to find the perfect clothes for me out of the hundreds of things we’ve seen is like *looking for a needle in a haystack*!

Orlando: Oh, don’t exaggerate. We haven’t seen that much. Hey look! That place looks nice. Let’s *check it out*.

Jade: I don’t know . . . those clothes in the window aren’t exactly *my cup of tea*. Plus, it looks expensive. We’d probably have to *pay through the nose* for anything we find.

Orlando: Did you *wake up on the wrong side of the bed* this morning or what?! Don’t be such a *wet blanket*. You’re the one who’s always complaining about your clothes being *out of style*. I let you *drag me out* shopping so you can *keep up with the trends*, so this is all for you, not for me.

Jade: Okay, you’re right. We’ll give it a try.

Orlando: Hey, look at this blouse. Do you want to *try it on*?

Jade: Wow, it’s a bit *low-cut*, don’t you think? And you can see right through it! Won’t *leave much to the imagination* . . .

Orlando: I don’t know, I think it might be kind of *hot*.

Jade: Forget about it, I’m not wearing that in public. It would *turn* too many *heads*, and you know you’re the jealous type.

Orlando: Well, in private then . . .

Jade: Just *drop it*!

Orlando: Okay, what about these pants?

Jade: Hmm . . . Those aren’t bad . . . Wait . . . Let me see the price . . . Right . . . Just as I thought. Unless you want to *cough up* \$150 for a pair of pants . . . I don’t think so.

Orlando: All right . . . How about these jeans? Nice cut, basic, they don’t cost an arm and a leg . . .

Jade: Yeah, but they look like cheap *knockoffs*. If I’m going to wear *bargain basement* clothing I want to be the only one who knows it.

Orlando: Oh, come on, these look fine. And besides, why do you give a darn what other people think?

Jade: Didn't you always use to say that *the clothes make the man*?

Orlando: Well, now I'm reformed. I just *throw on* whatever's clean and out the door I go.

Jade: Well, I like to *make a nice impression*, to *come off* as someone who cares about the way she looks.

Orlando: Speaking of which, check out these pants. They're really great.

Jade: Yeah . . . but these pleats, all these pockets, they're a bit *busy*.

Orlando: I think they're unusual, really *one of a kind*. Why don't you just try them on? You might like them.

Jade: Oh, all right. Hand them over. I'll try them on.

(Pause)

Orlando: Well, let's have a look! Can I see them on you?

Jade: What do you think? I don't think they're *me*. I told you it would be impossible to find . . .

Orlando: I hate to *burst your bubble*, but those pants look great on you . . . They *fit you like a glove*. Why are you frowning? We've finally found something that looks great!

Jade: Now we have to find a top to *go with it*!

1. Like looking for a needle in a haystack. Looking for something that is very difficult to find.
2. To check something out. To see or find out about something.
3. To be someone's cup of tea. To be pleasing or interesting to someone. To fit someone's tastes or interests.
4. To pay through the nose. To pay a lot of money.
5. To wake up on the wrong side of the bed. To be in a bad mood.
6. Wet blanket. Unenthusiastic or disagreeable, lacking the appropriate attitude or spirit for a particular situation.
7. Out of style. No longer in fashion or vogue.
8. To drag someone somewhere. To convince someone to go or come somewhere they don't want to be.

9. To keep up with the trends. To follow new fashions or trends very closely.

10. To try something on. To wear a piece of clothing to see if it fits properly or looks nice on a person. Notice that you can extend this idiom to "try something on for size." It can mean the same thing as to try an article of clothing on, or it can be used generally to mean to try something and see how it feels or works.

11. Low-cut. Describes clothing that is cut to reveal skin, to cover less of the body than usual.

12. It doesn't leave much to the imagination. Said of clothes that reveal a lot of skin, that are very tight, or that are nearly see-through.

13. Hot. Physically attractive, sexually appealing.

14. To turn heads. To be beautiful, to cause people to turn and look at you.

15. To drop something. To forget something, or to stop talking about something.

16. To cough something up. To find the means to provide something, especially money.

17. Knockoff. A cheap and low-quality reproduction of something expensive.

18. Bargain basement. The area of a store where older sale items are displayed for discount prices. This expression is also used to describe any cheap or low-quality clothing.

19. The clothes make the man. An expression meaning that people are judged by their appearance, including especially the clothes they choose to wear.

20. To throw on. To put clothes on hastily and thoughtlessly.

21. Make a nice impression. To give people a favorable idea of who you are.

22. To come off as. To give a certain impression, to suggest a certain attitude or style.

23. Busy. Describing something that is overly designed—clothes, patterns, wallpaper, art, etc.—or has too many elements.

24. One of a kind. Unique. Unlike anything else.

25. It's very me. It's typical of something I'd wear, do, or say. It's representative of me.

26. To burst someone's bubble. To disappoint someone. To give someone disappointing news.
27. To fit someone like a glove. To fit someone perfectly, as if the thing that fits were made specifically for that person.
28. To go with something. To match something. To look nice together with another thing.

## I'm Up to My Eyeballs in Work!

Dear Mom and Dad,

How are you? It's the end of the semester and I'm really *under the gun*. I'm *up to my eyeballs* in work. The amount of reading my professors assign is ridiculous. And, as you know, I thought I'd *try my hand* at a new sport and joined the university's rowing team this semester. With that decision, I may have *bitten off more than I can chew*. Between school, my job, and that, the only time I find time to study is late at night. I'm *burning the midnight oil* six days out of seven. And even though I've really *buckled down* and begun to study, I'm still not finding the time to get everything done.

What else? Oh! My old computer finally *bit the dust*. What a *pain in the neck*—right at the end of the semester! It really puts me *between a rock and a hard place*. I try to use the computers in the library, but it's only open until 11 p.m. I never make it there on time, so I have to ask my roommate if I can use his computer. But as you know, the guy is a bit odd. Personally, I don't think he's *playing with a full deck*. You know, I always say, "*you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours*," but the favors he asks of me are usually outrageous, and he then gets mad if I don't agree to them. The other day, he asked to borrow my car for a six-hour drive to visit his girlfriend for the day. When I said no, he *blew up* at me, and then that night, about an hour after I had *turned in* for the night, he got up, turned on his music and started to do yoga! Anyway, money's not so good now that I have to save for a new computer. I don't want to *cut corners* and buy a cheap computer, because I'd just have to replace it soon anyway.

On a more positive note, I'm *all about* this rowing thing. I wanted to be on the competition team next semester, but thought I didn't *have a prayer* since, for most of the guys on that team, rowing is *old hat*. They've *been at it* since they were kids and I'm still *green*. But

Coach said yesterday that if I keep at it, I'm *a shoo-in* for a position on the competition team. That *made my day*. Well, that's all for now. I'll write again soon.

Love, Brad

1. To be under the gun. To be under pressure or stress.
2. To be up to one's eyeballs in something. To have a lot of or too much of something.
3. To try one's hand at something. To try something for the first time.
4. To bite off more than you can chew. To commit yourself to more than you can handle.
5. To burn the midnight oil. To be awake and doing something late at night.
6. To buckle down. To dedicate yourself to an activity, to work very hard and seriously at something.
7. To bite the dust. To break. To be no more. To die.
8. To be a pain in the neck. To be an annoyance, a difficulty, a hindrance.
9. To be between a rock and a hard place. To be in a position where you can't do what you want to do because you're caught between two options that are both difficult or disagreeable.
10. To not be playing with a full deck. To behave in an illogical or crazy way. To be crazy.
11. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Said about a situation in which two people can benefit from each other's help. Each will do the other a favor in order to get what he or she wants from the other person.
12. To blow up at someone. To suddenly get very angry with someone and yell. To explode.
13. To turn in, or to turn in for the night. To go to bed.
14. To cut corners. To fail to spend the proper amount of money, effort, or time on something.
15. On a positive note. To talk about happier issues.
16. To be all about something. To be very interested or active in something. To like something very much.
17. To not have a prayer. To not have a chance or hope.
18. To be old hat. To be something someone is accustomed to.

19. To be at something. To engage or take part in something. Notice that you can also say “keep at” something, meaning to continue to take part in something.
20. To be green. To be new or inexperienced.
21. To be a shoo-in. To be the best or most likely candidate for something.
22. To make someone’s day. To cause someone great happiness, joy, or pride.

## She’s Got You Wrapped around Her Finger.

Frank: Heya Alan! Long time no see! How’s it going?

Alan: Good. Just here getting the ol’ ticker pumpin’. What about you?

Frank: Same old, same old.

Alan: Hey—I *ran into* your son Bobby the other day. Did he say Stacey’s *got one on the way*?

Frank: Sure did. About four months along with their second. They had a little girl ‘bout a year and a half ago. A *piece of work*, I tell ya. A *chip off the old block*.

Alan: *Ya don’t say*. How d’ya mean?

Frank: *Hardheaded*, just like Bobby, and when she’s *up to somethin’*, she gets that same look in her eye Bobby used to get when he was a kid. It’s really *something else*!

Alan: So she *takes after* her father, huh? That’ll give him a *taste of his own medicine*! All those years causing trouble in the neighborhood!

Frank: Yep—time to *pay the piper*.

Alan: I remember when my kids were that age—you’ve really got to *be on the ball*. Can’t *turn your back* for a minute before they’re already up to something.

Frank: Yeah. Don’t *keep up with* ‘em like I used to. Two hours and I’m *bushed*. But I tell ya, I’m *having a blast* being a grandfather. Not like with your own kids at all.

Alan: For sure . . . You get to *be a pushover* without any of the guilt!

Frank: Yeah . . . Like the other morning, I was baby-sitting. Well, the girl got it in her head that she wanted ice cream at 9 a.m.! She was *set on it*! At first I thought . . . No. Bobby’d *have a fit*. But then, I thought, hey, it’s not MY kid! So I *caved in* and gave it to her! Ice-cream for breakfast! Can you believe it?

Alan: Yeah, it’s easy to *buckle* when it’s your grandkids and not your kids! Sounds like she’s got you *wrapped around her finger*!

Frank: Yeah. *I’m hooked when it comes to this grandfather business*! Can’t wait for the next one.

1. To run into somebody. To meet somebody unexpectedly.
2. To have one on the way. To be pregnant. To be expecting a child.
3. A piece of work. A complicated, interesting, or amusing person. Often said ironically.
4. A chip off the old block. Said of children when they greatly resemble one of their parents in personality or behavior.
5. You don’t say. An expression used to show mild surprise, like saying “really?” This can also be a sarcastic expression, to show that you don’t find something as interesting as someone else does.
6. Hardheaded. Stubborn.
7. Up to something. Involved in some kind of mischief. Planning something.
8. Something else. An expression meaning “something noteworthy” or “something interesting or worth discussion.”
9. To take after. To have the same traits or characteristics as another person.
10. To have a taste of one’s own medicine. To be on the receiving end of behavior that one has subjected others to.
11. To pay the piper. To suffer the consequences of your actions, after a long time of not suffering any consequences.
12. On the ball. Ready, alert, highly prepared.
13. To turn your back on someone. Literally, to turn away from or look the other way. Note that this expression can also be used figuratively, meaning to abandon or stop caring about someone.

14. To keep up with something or someone. To go at the same speed or pace, to be aware of changes or current conditions.
15. To be bushed. To be very tired.
16. To have a blast. To have a lot of fun, to have a great time.
17. To be a pushover. To be easily convinced or persuaded.
18. Set on something. Fixated on something and determined to have it.
19. To have a fit. To have a temper tantrum. To lose control of your emotions. To display your anger.
20. To cave in. To give in. To allow yourself to be persuaded or tempted.
21. To buckle. To be persuaded, to change your mind.
22. To have someone wrapped around your finger. To cause someone to be obedient to you. To influence someone very greatly, to exert far too much influence on someone.
23. To be hooked. To enjoy something very much, to be convinced of something. In the context of drugs or alcohol, “hooked” can also mean “addicted.”
24. When it comes to something. Regarding, with regard to, or concerning something.

## That's Putting the Cart before the Horse.

Tobias: Hey, Sandra . . . Could you *fill me in* on the meeting this morning? I couldn't *make it*. I got a bit *bogged down* with the budget forecasts.

Sandra: Oh . . . Sure. Well, Wilson officially announced that the Plainfield branch will be closing next month, and most of the people there will be transferred here.

Tobias: Yeah, I've been *hearing* about that *through the grapevine* for a while. So, they didn't *give* many people *the boot*?

Sandra: None, actually. They offered early retirement to all of the people whose positions were being eliminated, and everyone *leaped at the chance*.

Tobias: Gee, I guess it was *win-win*, then.

Sandra: Right. And of course, we're going to be *taking on* all of the accounts that were managed out of Plainfield.

Tobias: Makes sense. So, what's next for us?

Sandra: You've probably heard about that big account they've been trying to win, Hanson Tech? Well, Wilson has a big project for us.

Tobias: A big project already? What's that?

Sandra: Wilson wants us to set up suppliers and shipping for Hanson. He wants to see a few different proposals by next week. We can get in touch with some of the people we already use, but . . .

Tobias: Whoa, *hold your horses* . . . Suppliers and shipping for an account we haven't won yet? Isn't that *putting the cart before the horse*?

Sandra: Probably, but I get the impression that this account has major potential, and a lot of people at corporate *have their eye on* Wilson. If anything *goes south* with it, it can't be his fault.

Tobias: Ah I *get it*. He's just *covering his back*.

Sandra: Yup. You've *hit the nail on the head* . . .

Tobias: But it still seems to me that this is all a bit premature. I don't want to have to be *swamped* for a week over something that might not even *come through*. Plus, I have a lot of work to do for our existing accounts!

Sandra: Well, you could bring that up to Wilson, but I have the feeling that it would *fall on deaf ears*.

Tobias: Plus, he'd probably just *jump down my throat*. He gets like that when he's feeling *cornered*.

Sandra: Or you could just *go over his head*. Make a few phone calls to corporate and . . .

Tobias: Yeah, right. *Don't hold your breath*. I think I'd prefer to *keep a low profile*.

Sandra: Not to mention keep your job.

Tobias: Yeah. No *pink slips* for me, thank you very much. Well, I guess it's *written in stone*, then.

Sandra: What is?

Tobias: The fact that we'll all be staying late and eating a lot of take-out over the next week.

1. To fill someone in on something. To inform someone of something he or she missed.
2. To make it to an event. To attend an event.
3. Bugged down. Busy, involved in tedious details.
4. To hear something through the grapevine. To learn of something through an unofficial channel.
5. To give someone the boot. To make someone leave, to send someone away. Here it is used to mean “lay someone off.”
6. To leap at the chance. To be eager to do something, to be very willing to accept an opportunity.
7. Win-win, or a win-win situation. A situation that is beneficial to everyone concerned.
8. To take on something. To become responsible for something. To agree to a new responsibility.
9. Hold your horses. Wait. Move more slowly.
10. To put the cart before the horse. To do something out of logical order, to perform a step before its appropriate time.
11. To have your eye on someone. To watch or examine someone closely.
12. To go south. To go wrong. To end or stop because of problems.
13. To get something. To understand something.
14. To cover your back. To take steps that will protect you in the future. To be very shrewd and cautious in protecting yourself against being held responsible for potential problems.
15. To hit the nail on the head. To identify the important issue or main point of a situation with precision.
16. Swamped. Very busy.
17. To come through. To happen, to materialize, to become a real event.
18. To fall on deaf ears. To be pointless to mention, suggesting that the person you’d like to talk to won’t care about your complaint, opinion, or problem.
19. To jump down someone’s throat. To overreact and attack someone verbally.
20. Cornered. Threatened. Feeling as if you don’t have many options left.
21. To go over someone’s head. To not confront someone about a problem, but instead bring it up with another person who is higher in authority.

22. To not hold your breath. To not wait for something to happen with much hope.
23. To keep a low profile. To do nothing that would draw attention to you or distinguish you from others.
24. Pink slip. Notification that you’ve been fired. The full expression is “to get a pink slip.”
25. Written in stone. Fixed, firm, unchangeable.

Officer: So, I see we’ve got a little *fender bender* here.

Mr. Randall: You can say that again.

Officer: Can you tell me what happened?

Mr. Randall: Well, we were coming out of the tollbooths, and this guy comes *barreling out* behind Mrs. Jessup here. I noticed he had been *riding her tail* for miles.

Mrs. Jessup: Yeah, I have to admit I was *rubbernecking* a little at the other accident, the one that happened right in front of the tollbooths.

Mr. Randall: And the other guy wasn’t expecting it, or he didn’t like it. He *sped up* to go around Mrs. Jessup, and then he tried to pull in front of her to *cut her off*. He ended up *sideswiping* Mrs. Jessup. And I guess he didn’t see me *coming up from behind* because he swerved back into my lane. I must have been in his *blind spot*. I *slammed on the brakes*, but I ended up *nailling* him from behind anyway. Mrs. Jessup and I *pulled over* and so did he at first. Then we got out of our cars to *swap information*, but the other guy was gone *like a bat out of hell*.

Officer: What about you, ma’am? Can you tell me what happened?

Mrs. Jessup: That seems to cover it. What he said is about right.

Officer: So, you’re both telling me this was a *hit and run*. Did either of you manage to get his license plate number?

Mrs. Jessup: I did. Here you go.

Officer: Well, lucky for you Mr. Randall, because you might have been charged for damages to this guy's car . . . but because he *took off* from the scene of the accident, you won't be held responsible.

Mr. Randall: That's a relief. I thought I was *looking at* a lawsuit.

Officer: If you give me a minute, I'll just radio this in so we can *track him down*.

Mr. Randall: When you get him, I won't have any problems *giving him a piece of my mind*.

Mrs. Jessup: And I *won't lose any sleep over taking him to the cleaners* for my car. It was brand new.

Officer: Well, I wouldn't *count my chickens before they hatch*, Mrs. Jessup. If you expect compensation, you might be *barking up the wrong tree*. In many of these cases, the perpetrators run because they are usually *caught up* in other illegal dealings or because they don't have insurance.

Mrs. Jessup: Fantastic. He could have *totaled* my car!

Officer: Well, at least no one is hurt. It could have been a lot worse. You two *sit tight* for a moment, and I'll have you right out of here and back on the road in no time.

1. Fender bender. A car accident that causes minimal damage, usually only to the front or back bumpers.
2. To barrel out of somewhere. To leave somewhere very quickly, usually with little attention to your surroundings. Notice that you may also hear barrel up, barrel down, barrel along, barrel in, etc.
3. To ride someone's tail. To follow someone at an uncomfortably close or dangerous distance. Notice that this expression doesn't necessarily have to be used for driving only.
4. To rubberneck. To drive slowly past the scene of an accident while turning your neck to see what happened.
5. To speed up. To accelerate.
6. To cut someone off. To pass in front of someone very closely and prevent them from moving ahead.
7. To sideswipe someone. To hit someone with the side edge of something.

8. To come up from behind. To approach someone from behind. Notice that you can also say come up from the side, come up from below, etc.
9. Blind spot. A part of someone's field of vision that is obstructed, so that things in this area cannot be seen.
10. To slam on the brakes. To press the brake pedal in a car forcefully and suddenly.
11. To nail someone. To hit or do damage to someone.
12. To pull over. To drive one's car to the side of the road in order to stop.
13. To swap information. To exchange names, phone numbers, license plate numbers, and insurance company information, especially after a car accident.
14. Like a bat out of hell. Moving in a fast and almost crazy manner.
15. Hit and run. A car accident where the person responsible for the accident leaves the scene before the police arrive.
16. To take off. To leave quickly.
17. To be looking at. To be in a position to expect something.
18. To track someone down. To find someone by following clues.
19. To give someone a piece of your mind. To give someone your opinion about him or her or something he or she has done. Usually it is a negative and harshly critical opinion.
20. To lose sleep over something. To worry about something. To feel upset or guilty about something.
21. To take someone to the cleaners. To fight for economic compensation until the other person has no more money left.
22. To count your chickens before they hatch. To depend on a beneficial or positive future event as if it were certain, even though it may not happen.
23. To bark up the wrong tree. To be seeking something from the wrong source. To be asking for something from a source that cannot or will not provide it.
24. To be caught up in something. To be involved in something wrong, illegal, or unethical.
25. To total a car. To inflict damages that, if repaired, would cost more than the value of the car.
26. To sit tight. To wait, to be patient.

Realtor: So, Mr. and Mrs. York . . . you've seen the place three times now. What do you think? Are you *in the market* for such a wonderful house?

Mrs. York: It really is lovely. But I think we'd like another week to *mull it over*.

Realtor: Sure. But I will say . . . for what you're getting, the scenic location, the amenities—the place is truly *a steal*. You won't find a better deal. The value of this land is *going up* daily . . . in a couple of years, it'll go *through the roof*. If you decide to buy, what you'll pay now is *a drop in the bucket* compared to what you could eventually sell it for. You'll really *clean up*.

Mrs. York: We'll keep that in mind. We just don't want to rush into anything . . . We want to *take our time* with this decision . . . We've *been burned* before.

Realtor: I should mention, though, there are two other couples who are *eyeing the place up*. They would like to see the place next week, and are *chomping at the bit* to buy it. And, because the buyer's market has never been better, you want to *strike while the iron's hot*.

Mr. York: Do you think we could have a couple minutes to ourselves to *talk things over*?

Realtor: Of course. I'll *make myself scarce* and wait for you outside.

Mr. York: From what I've seen, this place is *a dream come true*.

Mrs. York: Yes, dear . . . but *keep in mind*, it's his job to *talk the place up*. It does seem perfect—too perfect. I keep thinking, "What's *the catch*?"

Mr. York: So what aren't you happy with?

Mrs. York: Nothing in particular. I guess I always get cold feet before any big decision . . .

Mr. York: I thought maybe *you were hung up on the kitchen* . . . I know how you like your space in the kitchen.

Mrs. York: Oh, the kitchen is small, but that's not a problem. Besides, I'll have everything right *at my fingertips*, right?!

Mr. York: So what is the problem?

Mrs. York: It's just . . . so much money! We could *lose our shirts* with this!

Mr. York: Let's not forget, dear, anytime you make an investment, it's *a crapshoot*. But we should remember why we're doing this . . . We wanted to simplify our lives, and to have *a nest egg* for retirement. And from what Martin tells us, even if we end up hating it here, if we move, we'll almost surely make money—if not for the house, then for the land.

Mrs. York: You're right . . . And I do love that hot tub out back. . . .

Mr. York: We'll make an offer, then?

Mrs. York: Let's find Martin, and tell him it's a go.

1. To be in the market for something. To want to buy something, to be looking to buy something.
2. To mull something over. To think about something. To consider a situation.
3. To be a steal. To be a great bargain. To get a lot of value for your money.
4. To go up. To increase, to become higher or larger.
5. To go through the roof. With reference to money, price, value, it means "to become very high." To have an extreme, angry reaction.
6. To be a drop in the bucket. To be small in comparison to something else, to be a very small portion of some much larger total.
7. To clean up. To make a very large profit, to make a lot of money.
8. To take your time doing something. To not rush. To do something slowly and carefully.
9. To be burned. To be betrayed, fooled, or hurt, especially after expecting a positive outcome.
10. To eye something up. To look at, examine, or consider visually.
11. To chomp at the bit. To be very anxious or eager to do something.
12. To strike while the iron's hot. To take advantage of a favorable opportunity.
13. To talk something over. To discuss carefully in order to come to a decision.

14. To make yourself scarce. To leave, to move away from someone. Rude when said to someone else.
15. A dream come true. Something wonderful, something so good it's as though it came out of a dream.
16. To keep in mind. To remember. To consider.
17. To talk something up. To praise something verbally. To speak highly of something or exaggerate its value.
18. A catch. A drawback or negative quality that might not be obvious. In other contexts, "a catch" is a person who would be good to date.
19. To be hung up on something. To find fault with something, to identify a weakness or a drawback in something.
20. At your fingertips. Readily available.
21. To lose your shirt. To become financially ruined. To lose a lot of money.
22. A crapshoot. A chance or risk, named after the dice game.
23. Nest egg. A sum of money saved up and set aside.

## Off the Beaten Track

- Jeff: Simon! Madeline! Welcome! It's great to see you guys!
- Madeline: Hi, Jeff. Thanks for inviting us. And sorry we're a bit late. Simon decided to *take the scenic route*.
- Simon: Well, a captain is only as good as his navigator.
- Jeff: Uh-oh. Did I not give you decent directions? I know it's hard to find this place. It's a little bit *off the beaten track*.
- Madeline: Your directions were perfect, Jeff. We just got a little *mixed-up* coming off the interstate, and of course *it will be a cold day in hell before* Simon here stops and asks for directions, even in *the middle of nowhere*.
- Simon: Yeah, but I told you I could *wing it* and find my way here.
- Jeff: And here you both are. Well, come on in and *shake off the dust*. You can *freshen up*, and I'll *whip up* some of my famous guacamole and a drink or two. We can relax on the porch and *catch up* as the sun goes down.

- Madeline: Ah, a fiesta in the country! I can't wait. I can feel myself *unwinding* already.
- Simon: I'll say. Now there's a way to end a long drive . . . (A bit later . . .)
- Simon: Ah, what a great way to *kick off* our weekend in the country.
- Madeline: Yeah, I've been looking forward to some *R and R* for a long time. I've really needed to *recharge the batteries*.
- Jeff: Well, I'm glad to be able to offer you a *weekend getaway* for a break from the *rat race*. That's why I love being out here so much.
- Simon: So, how is the big change working out for you? Have you felt much *culture shock* moving out to *the sticks* like this?
- Jeff: No, not at all . . . I grew up in the country, so in a way, this feels more like home to me than the city. In fact, sometimes I felt like *a fish out of water* in the city. Of course, there are things I miss, but all in all I'm really happy to be out here in *the boondocks*.
- Madeline: So, you're here full time now, then?
- Jeff: Well, I still have a little place in the city, but this is where I *hang my hat* for now.
- Simon: And how's the writing coming along?
- Jeff: It's great . . . now. At first I was really afraid that it wasn't going to *pan out*, that I'd really made a terrible mistake leaving my job and moving here to write. I had a bad case of writer's block. But then I *snapped out of it*, and I've actually just finished my manuscript.
- Madeline: Hey, congratulations! Let's have a toast to that!
- Simon: Yeah, cheers!
- Madeline: And what about *the locals*? Are you meeting nice people here?
- Jeff: Oh, sure. When I bought the place, I didn't know anyone, of course. I think I *stuck out like a sore thumb*, too, because everyone knows everyone around here. People always seemed to be *sizing me up*, but *giving me the cold shoulder* at the same time.
- Simon: And it must have been rough *starting from square one* when it came to a social life, too.

Jeff: Yeah, that was not easy. No one *reached out* to me, except to *make small talk*.

Madeline: So, how did you *break the ice*? If I know you, you put on a big smile and had new friends *lined up at your door* in no time.

Jeff: Actually, I had a secret weapon.

Simon: A secret weapon? What's that?

Jeff: You're eating it.

Madeline: The guacamole?

Jeff: Hey, I told you it was famous. Around here, at least.

Simon: So, you just started handing complete strangers bowls of guacamole? Gee, you'd think that would *raise a few eyebrows*...

Jeff: No, of course not. There was actually a *good old-fashioned* town picnic, so I brought as much of the stuff as I could make. As soon as people started tasting it, I had all sorts of welcomes and invitations to dinner!

Madeline: So it's true that the fastest way to someone's heart is through their stomach.

Simon: And speaking of which... when's dinner?

Jeff: Whenever we want. We're not *on the clock* here.

Madeline: Great, because that sunset is gorgeous. I could sit here all weekend. No lights, no sirens, no honking horns... I could really get used to this.

Simon: Yup, this is the life!

1. To take the scenic route. Jokingly, to get lost and take a long time to reach a destination.
2. Off the beaten track. Remote, faraway, hard to get to, and not very well known. Notice that you can also say "off the beaten path."
3. Mixed-up. Confused.
4. It will be a cold day in hell before something happens. It is highly unlikely or improbable that something will happen.
5. The middle of nowhere. A very remote place, especially someplace wild and far away from people or towns.
6. To wing it. To do something without following instructions or directions. To improvise.

7. To shake off the dust. To rest and compose yourself after a long trip, as if you had been walking for a long time and were covered in dust from the road.
8. To freshen up. To wash up and relax. To tidy your appearance and overall condition after something tiring.
9. To whip up. To prepare something, especially food, in a fast and improvised way.
10. To catch up. To talk and share recent news after not having seen someone in a while.
11. To unwind. To relax and free yourself from stress.
12. To kick off. To begin something.
13. R and R. Rest and Relaxation.
14. To recharge the batteries. To rest and regain physical and psychological strength.
15. A weekend getaway. A place to go to for the weekend where you can rest and relax.
16. The rat race. The total system of life centered around working hard—commuting, struggling to be successful and get ahead, dealing with the stresses of life, worrying about bills, etc.
17. Culture shock. Reaction to a very significant change in way of life.
18. The sticks. The country. A rural area.
19. A fish out of water. Out of place, not in your natural environment.
20. The boondocks. The country, the rural areas far away from cities or big towns. Note that this expression is often shortened to "the boonies."
21. A place to hang your hat. A place to call home, a place to feel at home.
22. To pan out. To be successful, to work out well.
23. To snap out of it. To recover after a state of confusion, sadness, or psychological fatigue.
24. The locals. The people who live in a certain place. The local people.
25. To stick out like a sore thumb. To be very visible or obvious, to draw attention to yourself because you are different in some noticeable way.
26. To size someone up. To examine or evaluate someone, especially visually.

27. To give someone the cold shoulder. To fail to be warm and welcoming to someone, to ignore someone, especially on purpose.
28. To start from square one. To start again, to start a process from the very beginning.
29. To reach out. To extend a welcome to a person, to put forth an effort to communicate with someone.
30. To make small talk. To make insignificant conversation with someone, especially only to be polite.
31. To break the ice. To put an end to a time of silence or lack of communication. To initiate a conversation or friendliness with someone.
32. Lined up at your door. Eager and in large numbers.
33. To raise eyebrows. To bring attention to yourself, to cause people to notice you as someone different or unconventional. Notice that this expression is similar to “stick out like a sore thumb,” but there’s a hint of a moral judgment with “raise eyebrows.”
34. Good old-fashioned. Traditional.
35. On the clock. On a strict schedule, especially on working time.

## Turning Over a New Leaf

BJ: Hi . . . Excuse me. Could you tell me where the nearest subway stop is?

Keith: Uhh, yeah . . . Four blocks that way, and a block to the left. Fourteenth and First Avenue.

BJ: Thanks. Uff. Do you mind if I *take a load off*? I’ve been walking forever.

Keith: No . . . Go ahead. Are you new to the city?

BJ: Yeah. I just moved here two weeks ago.

Keith: What brings you to New York?

BJ: Well, *in a nutshell*, I guess I wanted to *make a clean break*, you know, start over.

Keith: I hear ya. I’m trying to *turn over a new leaf* myself.

BJ: Really? What is it you do?

Keith: Well, actually, things are a bit *up in the air* at the moment. I was just fired from my job.

BJ: Oh no. I’m sorry to hear that.

Keith: *No big deal* really. I wanted to leave that job ages ago. I kept *putting it off* out of laziness.

BJ: Wow, you lost your job? So what did you do?

Keith: I was working for a magazine. I wanted to be a writer when I got out of college. I took this job as the assistant to an editor, thinking it would be a *foot in the door*. I was wrong.

BJ: Do you mind me asking why you got fired?

Keith: I *showed up* for work late one too many times, I guess. Actually, they were already unhappy with me before. Showing up late was just *the straw that broke the camel’s back*.

BJ: So what do you *have in mind* now?

Keith: I was thinking of going back to school or taking writing classes.

BJ: Ya know, I want to start taking some classes too. Right now, I teach.

Keith: What do you teach?

BJ: Dance. Mostly salsa these days. But it’s just to *get on my feet* until I *get a break* in performance.

Keith: I’ve always been interested in learning salsa, but I’ve never been sure I’d be good at it. You see, I *have two left feet*.

BJ: Oh, come on. I’m sure you’re *being hard on yourself*. You should come by the studio sometime and check out our classes. The truth is, since I’m new, I don’t have many students yet. The old students *stick to* the teachers they had before. So I have to find new ones.

Keith: Wow, dance classes. I’ve never considered that before! Why not? I might do that. In any case, I have nothing but free time now, right?

BJ: Here’s my number at the studio. My name is BJ, *by the way*.

Keith: I’m Keith. Nice to meet you.

BJ: Likewise. Well, guess I better *hit the road*. Lots to do today!

Keith: Good luck. Hope it turns out well for you.

BJ: Nice talking to you. Give me a call. Maybe we can have coffee sometime.

Keith: Yeah, that would be great. I'll call you.

BJ: Cool. See ya.

Keith: Gee, I guess things are already *looking up* . . .

1. To take a load off. To rest by sitting down.
2. In a nutshell. Concisely and quickly explained.
3. To make a clean break. To forget about something in the past, to start fresh.
4. To turn over a new leaf. To begin a new project or period in your life.
5. To be up in the air. To not have direction or definite shape.
6. No big deal. Not important.
7. To put something off. To delay something, to postpone something, to procrastinate.
8. To have a foot in the door. To be in a situation that could lead to better opportunities. Notice that you may also "get a foot in the door" or "give someone a foot in the door."
9. To show up. To arrive.
10. The straw that broke the camel's back. An event or thing that by itself is insignificant, but added to other problems is just enough to leave a big impact or cause a big change.
11. To have something in mind. To have an idea or conception about something.
12. To get on your feet. To become stable financially, emotionally, socially, etc.
13. To get a break. To be given an opportunity to do something you want to do.
14. To have two left feet. To be ungraceful, to move in a clumsy or awkward way, especially while dancing.
15. To be hard on someone. To be strict or difficult with someone, to be demanding, to be overly critical or disciplinary.
16. To stick to someone or something. To stay with someone or something.
17. By the way. This expression introduces an afterthought. It is used before saying something that is somehow related to what's already been said.

18. To hit the road. To begin to travel or move. To set off on a trip.
19. To be looking up. To seem positive, to suggest a positive outcome or improvement.

Father: We need to talk.

Patrick: Can this wait? It's after two. I'm tired.

Mother: You're hardly ever home, Patrick. We can't put this off any longer.

Patrick: Fine. What?

Father: We want to talk to you about your life.

Patrick: Here it comes . . .

Father: You need to be more responsible. You stay out too late. You're not taking your graduation very seriously.

Patrick: *Give me a break!* I do have a job, you know.

Father: Actually, you've had three different jobs in the last six weeks. You seem to *brush them off* like they're games. And you aren't *putting away* any of your money. You *burn through it* and *live paycheck-to-paycheck*.

Patrick: Well, it's *no skin off your nose*. It's my money, right?

Mother: Yes, but you don't seem to be thinking at all about your future. We can't support you forever, you know. You've got to start to *make your own way in the world* soon.

Father: Patrick, you're smart. You have to get a real job. If you'd like, I can help you *get the ball rolling*. I'd like to get you a job working at my company. It will be a way to *get your feet wet* in business until you find something on your own.

Patrick: It's like *talking to a wall* with you two! How many times do I have to tell you? I don't want to work in business! I'm going to be a writer.

Father: Patrick, that's an admirable goal, but you can't *go about it* with your *head in the clouds*. You need to start

somewhere concrete, but even before that you need to earn a living somehow.

Patrick: I've told you a thousand times, I don't want to *sell out* and work for a corporation!

Mother: Who put this idea in your head anyway? Was it Marcie?

Patrick: I knew it. That's what this is all about. Just because you don't *get along with Marcie*!

Father: Patrick, it's true that we don't *see eye to eye* with you on girlfriends. But this is not about Marcie. This is about you *taking charge of your life*.

Mother: *Wake up and smell the coffee*, Patrick . . . Marcie hasn't set very high goals for herself in life, and if you . . .

Father: Honey, we agreed we'd focus on the job situation first. Let's just . . .

Patrick: Oh, I can't believe this!

Father: Your mother just wants the best for you. But your relationship with Marcie is *neither here nor there*. The point is you are twenty-three and haven't had a decent job since you graduated.

Patrick: Must you constantly be on my case about this? Look, the way I see it, it's my life now, and I'm the only one who should have to worry about it. You two have to *cut the cord*.

Father: Well, we're glad you think so son, because your mother and I have decided *it's about time* you moved out.

Patrick: What?!

Father: Time to *face the music*. *It's sink or swim*, Patrick. Welcome to the real world.

Patrick: You're just *cutting me off*?

Mother: Oh, of course not, son. Your father is just being dramatic. But it really is time for you to face the real world. We're doing this because we love you. We'll be there to help if you need it.

Patrick: Oh. Okay . . . So, does that mean I can drop my laundry off here for you, Mom?

1. To give someone a break. To hold back criticism, judgment, or effort against someone.

2. To brush something off. To fail to take something seriously. To treat something as unimportant or inconsequential.
3. To put something away. To save something, such as money.
4. To burn through something. To use something very fast, with little care for future supplies.
5. To live paycheck-to-paycheck. To earn only enough money to meet weekly or monthly bills, to not be able to save or spend on nonessentials.
6. No skin off someone's nose. To be of no concern or importance to someone. To fail to affect someone. To say "it's no skin off your nose" means that there's an inconvenience only for the speaker, but none for the listener.
7. To make your own way in the world. To support yourself, to be responsible for your own needs in life.
8. To get the ball rolling. To get started doing something.
9. To get your feet wet. To get experience, to try something out.
10. Like talking to a wall. Communicating with someone who doesn't understand or listen.
11. To go about something. To handle, to act, or to perform in a situation or with a certain goal.
12. To have your head in the clouds. To be a dreamer, to fail to be realistic or pay attention to realistic needs.
13. To sell out. To betray your principles for money.
14. To get along with. To behave in an agreeable way with someone.
15. To see eye to eye. To agree.
16. To take charge of something. To become responsible for something and make active decisions about it.
17. To wake up and smell the coffee. To acknowledge the reality of a situation.
18. Neither here nor there. To not be the point. To not matter or be important in the current context.
19. To cut the cord. To detach yourself from someone or something that you used to have strong influence or control over. The image is of a baby being physically attached to his or her mother by the umbilical cord.
20. It's about time. To be the right time. This expression may also communicate the opinion that something should have been done a long time ago.

## Let's Catch a Flick, Then Grab a Bite.

21. To face the music. To confront or accept unpleasant realities or consequences of bad actions.
22. To sink or swim. To be in a situation where you must either perform your best or fail.
23. To cut someone off. To stop someone's supply of something, often money or support.

Art: Logan! There you are!

Logan: Hey Art . . . Glad you caught me . . . I was just *packing up shop*.

Art: I was almost *out the door* too, then I remembered you wanted to get together this weekend. You still *feel up to it*?

Logan: I do . . . but you're not gonna *stand me up* like you did last week, are you?

Art: Are you still *stewing over* that?! *Cut me some slack*, Logan. It wasn't my fault plans *fell through* at the last minute . . . There was an emergency.

Logan: You *left me high and dry* ten minutes before the concert started!

Art: Logan, I told you I had to pick up my niece from soccer practice. Her mom's car broke down . . . I said I was sorry. What else can I do?

Logan: So . . . you'd like to *make it up* to me . . . Hmm . . .

Art: Uh-oh . . .

Logan: I'll think about it and let you know. But *in the meantime*, I definitely need to *let off some steam* after this week. What a headache!

Art: Same here.

Logan: Any ideas?

Art: I dunno . . . something *low-key*. I've been running around *like a chicken with its head cut off* all week.

Logan: How about *catching a flick*?

Art: Okay . . . But we never see eye to eye on movies. What've you got in mind? No *chick flicks*, I hope.

Logan: Don't be such a sexist pig! You know . . . there is that new romantic comedy with . . .

Art: Oh, I KNEW it!

Logan: Hey! You owe me!

Art: Fine, then. Guess I'll just *zone out* for two hours . . .

Logan: Uh-uh. No zoning out . . . I'm gonna ask for a *play-by-play* when the movie's over.

Art: You don't *let a person off easy*, do you?

Logan: Nope.

Art: All right, all right. So, how 'bout *grabbing a bite to eat* before the movie; I'm starving.

Logan: Great . . . I'm *so hungry I could eat a horse* right now.

Art: So . . . we'll meet in about an hour and a half?

Logan: Perfect . . . and that about *evens the score*.

Art: What do you mean?

Logan: Dinner's *on you*!

1. To pack up shop. To prepare a place in order to leave it.
2. To be out the door. To leave. To be gone.
3. To feel up to something. To have the desire to do something.
4. To stand someone up. To not show up for a date or appointment without giving the other person advance warning.
5. To stew over something. To be quietly angry about something.
6. To cut someone some slack. To give someone a break. To be understanding of someone's situation.
7. To fall through. To not be accomplished. To not work out.
8. To leave someone high and dry. To fail to do something that someone else was depending on. To bail on someone without warning or trying to make up for it in some other way.
9. To make it up to someone. To compensate someone for something, especially something that you've done wrong. To do something in order to apologize.
10. In the meantime. While waiting. In the time that passes between one event and another.
11. To let off some steam. To release or let go of built-up energy, anxiety, or pressure.

12. Low-key. Relaxed and quiet. Simple.
13. Like a chicken with its head cut off. Moving around quickly and crazily, as if without reason or thought.
14. To catch a flick. To see a movie.
15. A chick flick. A romantic or emotional movie, as opposed to an action movie or thriller, suggesting (chauvinistically) that these movies appeal mostly to women.
16. To zone out. To stop thinking or become unaware of one's environment.
17. A play-by-play. A moment to moment description of events, either as they happen or after the fact.
18. To let someone off easy. To allow someone to get away with unacceptable behavior with only a light punishment. A similar expression is "to let someone off the hook." This means to not hold someone responsible for something, or to not punish him or her for a mistake or misdeed.
19. To grab a bite. To eat a snack or light meal, usually outside of the house.
20. To be so hungry you could eat a horse. To be very hungry. Used humorously.
21. To even the score. To settle things, to make things even, to arrive at a fair resolution between two people.
22. To be "on" someone. To be someone's responsibility, especially financially.

## Take the Bull by the Horns.

Brad: Hey, Stephen! So what's the word?! Are you gonna go for the Sales Director position? Have you talked to Bonnie yet?

Stephen: Well, I'm not sure. . . . I'm still mulling it over. I heard Larry say he was going for the job, and that he was sure he was a shoo-in for the position. That kind of *took the wind out of my sails*. I don't know . . . what's *your take on* the situation?

Brad: Listen, Larry *talks a big game*, but has nothing to *back it up*. Plus, he's a bit *wet behind the ears* when it comes to managing people.

Stephen: Maybe, but I want to be sure that I'll get the position before I ask . . . I don't want anyone to get the idea I'm not content where I am, and then be stuck here.

Brad: I hear ya . . . People *in the same boat* have *been canned* before, or at least *passed up* for promotion later on.

Stephen: Exactly. Thing is, I really need this new job . . . I'm *earning peanuts* now, and with the baby, I just can't seem to *make ends meet*. Plus there are some things that need to be fixed on the house, and problems with the car that I've let sit *on the back burner* for ages . . . and I just can't afford to do that anymore.

Brad: Well, if you ask me . . . you and that job? *A match made in heaven*. That job *has your name on it*. You'd be perfect for it . . . It wouldn't be like a new job at all, it'd be more like a promotion. And you've definitely *got Bonnie where you want her* . . . Jolie left and they are *hard-pressed to fill the slot* quickly. And you've got all the qualifications. Go tell Bonnie that you want that job!

Stephen: Yeah, I just want to make sure I've got all my *ducks in a row* before I step into her office.

Brad: What ducks?! You need more money; you'd be good at the job; all you've got to do is *step up to the plate*.

Stephen: Well, there's also the issue of my family life. I already *have my fingers in too many pies*. I worry that I won't be able to *take on* more responsibility. It will mean more to take home at night.

Brad: Okay . . .

Stephen: And I don't want to *jump the gun*. I mean, there's always a good and a bad time to do these things . . . and that position won't actually be open for another three months.

Brad: Listen . . . there's no time like the present . . . You know what your obstacle in this is? You're not assertive enough. They need someone. Just *take the bull by the horns*, march in there, and present yourself for the position.

Stephen: Do you really think so?

Brad: Absolutely.

Brad: *Put your best foot forward.* Remember . . . bull . . . horns . . . Go for it!

1. To take the wind out of someone's sails. To take away someone's enthusiasm or hope for something.
2. A take on something. An opinion or interpretation of something.
3. To talk a big game. To exaggerate one's abilities or powers.
4. To back something up. To support, to lend evidence or strength to something.
5. To be wet behind the ears. To be inexperienced or new at something.
6. In the same boat. In the same situation.
7. To be or get canned. To be or get fired.
8. To pass up for something. To fail to consider for something or to grant a reward for something.
9. To earn peanuts. To earn very little money.
10. To make ends meet. To earn enough money to pay for one's expenses.
11. To be on the back burner. To be put off, to not be taken care of immediately.
12. To be a match made in heaven. To be perfect together.
13. To have someone's name on it. To belong to someone, to be the logical or rightful property or achievement of a particular person.
14. To get or have someone where you want him or her. To maneuver someone into a position or situation that benefits you.
15. To be hard-pressed. To be pressured by extreme necessity to do something.
16. To fill a slot. To hire a person for an open or available position.
17. To have your ducks in a row. To have everything orderly and planned out.
18. To step up to the plate. To volunteer yourself, to act responsibly in a time of need.

19. To have your fingers in too many pies. To be committed to too many goals or projects.
20. To take on. To make yourself responsible for something, to agree to an obligation.
21. To jump the gun. To do something too early, to act too quickly.
22. To take the bull by the horns. To approach a situation directly and with determination.
23. To put your best foot forward. To present your best attributes and qualities.

LESSON

# 19

## Just Checking In . . .

Father: Hello?

Maya: Hey Dad! How are ya?

Father: Maya! Glad you called.

Maya: *Just checking in* . . . How are things going?

Father: Well, to tell the truth, we're *having a rough time of it*.

Maya: What's happening?

Father: Well, your mother is *feeling a bit under the weather*.

Maya: Oh no. . .

Father: Don't worry, she's *caught a bug* is all.

Maya: I hope she *gets over it* soon.

Father: Seems like a 24-hour thing . . . She'll be *back on her feet* in a day or so, I think.

Maya: That's good. I'm sorry I haven't called in a few weeks. I was so far behind in my schoolwork, it took me some time to *get up to speed* for my midterms. What's been going on at home?

Father: Your mother and I were planning on calling you today to give you some bad news.

Maya: What happened?

Father: Your great uncle Bill just *passed away*.

Maya: You're kidding! I talked to him only two weeks ago . . . He seemed fine.

Father: Yeah, we were sure he would *pull through*. But he got an infection, and his health *took a nosedive*. He *went downhill* fast.

Maya: This is terrible.

Father: It *caught everyone off-guard*. Your aunt Helen said one day he was fine; the next day he was gone.

Maya: I can't believe this. . . . And how is Aunt Helen *taking it*?

Father: You know your aunt—she's *hanging in there*. But she's *up to her neck* in bills.

Maya: I can imagine. . . . what with the funeral and all.

Father: Not just that. Hospital, doctors, medication. It *costs a pretty penny* these days. But your aunt says it was *worth every dime*. . . . She said the folks at the hospital *bent over backwards* to make them feel comfortable and at home. And Uncle Bill didn't suffer very much. He was smiling right up to the end.

Maya: Is there anything I can do?

Father: You might want to call your cousin. It seems this is *taking a big toll* on Jackie. Your aunt says she's not eating and won't talk to anyone.

Maya: You think she'll talk to me if I call?

Father: It's worth a shot.

Maya: All right. Is there anything else?

Father: Yes, we'll be *paying our respects* this Friday. Do you think you can *catch a flight* home?

Maya: I don't have Friday classes, and I'll *take off from* work. I'll be there in the morning.

Father: Okay, give me a call with the details and I'll come and pick you up at the airport.

Maya: Okay, I will. Bye, Dad.

1. To check in with someone. To talk to or visit with someone for the purpose of saying hi, or letting someone know that you're okay.
2. To have a rough time of it. To experience difficulty dealing with a situation.
3. To feel or be under the weather. To feel ill, to feel less than healthy.
4. To catch a bug. To become sick with a cold or flu.

5. To get over something. To no longer suffer the pain or discomfort of something. This expression can also mean, "to move on, to feel better after a difficult situation."
6. To be back on your feet. To recover from sickness, to feel healthy again.
7. To be up to speed on something. To know or have all the necessary information about something.
8. To pass away. To die.
9. To pull through. To overcome a temporary difficult situation, including a serious injury or illness.
10. To take a nosedive. To become worse very quickly. Notice that "nose-dive" is also a verb.
11. To go downhill. To become bad very quickly. To deteriorate.
12. To catch off-guard. To catch someone unprepared. To happen without expectation or by surprise.
13. To take something. To react to a situation emotionally. To respond to something.
14. To be hanging in there. To handle something as well as can be expected, especially a very difficult situation.
15. To be up to your neck in something. To have a lot of something to deal with, look after, or take care of.
16. To cost a pretty penny. To be expensive.
17. To be worth every dime. To be a reasonable match of value and cost.
18. To bend over backwards. To do more than is required or expected in order to help someone.
19. To take a toll on someone. To have negative consequences for someone.
20. To pay your respects. To visit the family of a deceased person in order to show you care and tell them you are sorry.
21. To catch a flight. To take a plane to somewhere, sometimes on short notice.
22. To take off from something. To not attend your normally scheduled activity, such as work.

## Just Go with the Flow!

Marcus: I can't even stand up on these things!

Mina: Relax ... Don't try so hard.

Marcus: You know what ... I must *have a screw loose*—I can't ski! I've never *been one to do anything* athletic—I'm just gonna *throw in the towel* now.

Mina: *Just keep your shirt on!* You haven't even tried yet! Don't be such a *stick in the mud*! Here, take my hand. Good. Now ... First thing you want to do is bend your knees.

Marcus: Like this?

Mina: Yeah ... Now lean back. ... All right, good. ... Doing great.

(A bit later ...)

Mina: Now, pretend your knees are like springs. When you hit a bump ...

Marcus: There're bumps?! I thought we were on the bunny trail!

Mina: We are ... but yeah ... there might be a couple of small ones ...

Marcus: Well, what do I do then?!

Mina: *Just go with the flow.* Pretend your knees are springs. Let them bend with the curve of the terrain. Don't be stiff.

Marcus: Sure ... Whatever ...

Mina: Same goes if you fall ...

Marcus: There's falling involved?!

Mina: You're *bound* to fall ... You're just learning ... Anyway ... worst thing is if you're stiff when you fall ... You'll really do a number on yourself if your body's tense when you hit the ground.

Marcus: Hey! Look at that kid! She's not using any poles!

Mina: Yeah, actually, it's more about balance and your knees. Poles help balance, of course ... but when you're learning, they can be a distraction ... Maybe you should ...

Marcus: No way ... I'm keeping the poles. They're my *security blanket*.

Mina: All right, whatever ... Now to stop ... make your skis into a wedge shape, and just let yourself slowly come to a stop. Let's *give it a whirl* ... Drift towards me ... and ...

Marcus: Here I come!

Mina: Wedge!

Marcus: Whoa!

Mina: That was great! You're really *batting a thousand*!

Marcus: I can't believe I just did that! I'm actually *taking* to this skiing stuff!

Mina: *Like a duck to water!*

Marcus: Would you say that I'm *poetry in motion*?

Mina: Well, maybe not quite yet. But soon enough, so ... ready to *get this show on the road*?

Marcus: Don't I need more practice?

Mina: This WILL BE your practice. Let's go up to the top.

Marcus: Yikes, from the top this hill looks a lot steeper than I thought ...

Mina: They always do ... you just have to see your path down, and *make up your mind* to follow it.

Marcus: Uhh ...

Mina: Listen, don't worry, you have the basics. *It's all downhill from here* ... Literally.

Marcus: Very funny.

Mina: Best thing about a day on the slopes is the evening. Tonight, you're going to *sleep like a log*, my friend. Here we go ...

Marcus: Mina, if I *buy the farm* on the way down, I think you should know ... You've always been my closest friend ...

Mina: Right ... Now get going.

Marcus: I can't move. My legs won't let me. ... Hey! What are you doing?!

Mina: You'll be here all day, if I let you ... I'm just *giving you* a bit of a *jump start*. ...

Marcus: You wouldn't! You'd really push your best friend down a ski slope?!

Mina: See you at the bottom!

Marcus: Whooooaa!

1. To have a screw loose. To be crazy. To be thinking unreasonably.
2. To be one to do something. This expression is used to communicate someone's typical or characteristic behavior. Notice that this expression is most commonly used in the negative.
3. To throw in the towel. To quit. To stop doing something.
4. Keep your shirt on! Remain calm. Relax. Be patient.
5. A stick in the mud. A boring person. Someone who's uptight and spoils the fun.
6. To go with the flow. To take things as they come. To not worry or try to anticipate the future.
7. To be bound to happen. To be extremely likely to happen, to be certain.
8. A security blanket. Something that makes someone feel safe, even if it does not actually provide safety.
9. To give something a whirl. To give something a shot. To try something.
10. To be batting a thousand. To be on a roll. To be performing very well. Note that this can also be used sarcastically to imply that someone is doing poorly.
11. To take to. To find an interest in, to learn that you enjoy something.
12. Like a duck to water. To act as if you're in your natural environment. To be at ease doing something.
13. Poetry in motion. Someone or something that moves gracefully.
14. To get the show on the road. To begin something. To start doing something.
15. To make up your mind. To decide.
16. It's all downhill from here. Everything is easy after this moment.
17. To sleep like a log. To sleep so well that you hardly move.
18. To buy the farm. To die. This expression is usually used in a lighthearted or joking way.
19. To give something a jump start. To provide help, motivation, or incentive to start something.